

**Proposed Minutes
Friend of the Court Bureau
Advisory Committee Meeting
State Court Administrative Office, Lansing, MI
Friday, May 9, 2008**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Doug Howard, Anita Bilek, Shawn Perry, Lisa Trustcott, Kelly Walters, Jules Hanslovsky, Lynn Ann Bullard, Suzanne Hoseth,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Zenell Brown, Karyn Ferrick, Pete Dever

STAFF PRESENT: Dan Bauer, Steve Capps

EX-OFFICIO: Jules Hanslovsky, Suzanne Hoseth, Lynn Bullard

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting came to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. Administrative Matters

- a. Approval of the February 22, 2008 Minutes
Approval of the February 22, minutes. A motion made by Shawn Perry to approve the Minutes as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.
- b. 2008 Advisory Committee meeting schedule
Dan Bauer requested on behalf of a new committee member a request to meet any day other than Friday. Committee members state that discussion of this topic took place within the last year and the committee agreed that meeting on Friday worked best with the standard court calendar. The consensus is to remain meeting on Fridays. Meetings for the remainder of 2008 will be Friday, August 22, and Friday, November 14. Meetings will cancel if a quorum of five members, excluding ex-officio members, is unattainable.
- c. New FOCB Staff support
Dan Bauer officially resigned from his "public member" status after accepting a position with SCAO working in the FOCB. He will now serve as Staff Support.
- d. New FOCB Advisory Committee members
Anita Bilek, Public Member
Kelleen Walters, Human Services Professional

3. Public Comment –

- a. Robert Kerr spoke to the committee.
He requested that the agenda post to the website earlier [to](#) allow adequate time to prepare public comment.

Mr. Kerr urged the FOCB Advisory committee to support HB 4564 and spoke of specific concerns he had in his case.

b. Doug Howard, committee chair, stated that every effort will be made to post the agenda earlier even if it can only be a skeleton agenda. .

Mr. Howard advised that the committee cannot speak to case specifics, and cannot take any case-specific action, nor can the committee recommend to FOCB the support of specific legislation, as FOCB has no legislative agenda or lobbying ability. However, individual members of the committee are free to advocate for any bills that they want to advocate for in their private or otherwise public capacity.

4. **Correspondence** – None.

5. **New Business**

a. Begin discussion on domestic relations proposals.

FOCB is seeking input from the FOCB Advisory Committee on proposals the Court has received from various sources. There will be discussion of each topic at multiple meetings, with recommendations delivered to the FOCB after the advisory committee has reached consensus.

“Encourage Attendance at Divorce Orientation Program” was the focal point of the meeting. The committee discussed existing divorce orientation programs. The committee split the topic into two categories:

- 1) **FOC Orientation** (what the FOC does, how the FOC does it, etc.) and
- 2) **Parenting Orientation** (how to co-operatively parent your children with your former spouse, etc.).

Primary discussion was on 2) Parenting Orientation. Two programs that are used throughout many counties are “Start Making It Livable for Everyone (SMILE)”, and “Children in the Middle” program. Eaton County developed a similar program called “Tender Places”. Ingham County also used this program. It incorporates a video with role-playing. Van Buren County is offering a voluntary “Children in the Middle” program developed with Western Michigan University (WMU). It is also considering creating a web based training (WBT).

The committee discussed that each county has its own policy regarding attendance at these programs. Policies vary from “attendance is mandatory and the judge won’t sign the divorce decree until provided with proof of attendance”, or “attendance is mandatory, but there’s no enforcement, the judge signs the divorce decree with or without proof of attendance”.

The committee reported that programs are available for parents to view at various times. One county offers monthly, one month over lunch, the next month at 6 p.m. The FOC office can get local county people (attorneys, psychologists, etc.) to volunteer their time to aid in the presentation. Other counties offer one night and one weekend day per month. Currently, in Van Buren county about five parents per month attend, out of 70 new parents a month served.

The committee held discussion over mandatory versus encouraged attendance. It also discussed whether the trainings should be separate or concurrent (how to navigate the FOC and how to co-parent in the same training). Some may attend one but not both, while both would likely be helpful.

The committee questioned SCAO regarding resources available to update the FOC orientation video, and SCAO to review options to publish web cast, WBT, or in the alternative, a DVD version to distribute to the FOC. A video or DVD would allow people to watch the information while waiting in FOC waiting rooms. Steve Capps, director of SCAO's Trial Court Services, indicated that if the FOCB Advisory Committee recommends, then SCAO could research funding opportunities.

The committee made the following recommendation:

"The FOCB Advisory Committee recommends that the FOCB strongly encourage, but not mandate, creation (centrally) and use (locally) of a DVD distinguishing FOC from court/judge and combine that video with a parenting time segment. The committee also recommends that SCAO maximize distribution of the video on its website, with specific statements that clarify which functions are mandatory and which are optional."

Meeting adjourned